

THE ORPHAN BOY WHO CREATED ROLEX

*We
develop a passion
for Teaching!*



INFINITY PODCASTS 1428

[Music]
rolex is one of the most
luxury brands
in the world valued today at
around 8
billion dollars its history dates
back a
century ago and began with
an orphan
teenager whose inheritance
was stolen
away from him
with nothing other than his
determination to overcome
his challenges
he ran away from his
hometown and moved
to another country
after a few years working his

way out he
decided to follow his passion
and opened
a watchmaking business
little did he know that this
business
venture would lead him to
pioneer modern
wristwatches changing its
whole industry
and creating a billion dollar
empire

hans wilsdorf was born in
kumbak germany
on march 22 1881 by parents
anna and
johan daniel wilsdorf he was
the second
son of three children his

family ran a
fairly successful business that
was
passed down from his
grandfather selling
iron goods classifying them in
the
middle range class
unfortunately his mother got
ill during
the next few years and died in
1892 to
make it worse a year later his
dad would
pass away too leaving hans an
orphan at
the age of 12.
now under the custody of his
mother's

brothers his uncle
immediately decided
to sell his family's business
and used
some of the money for their
education
putting all three of them in a
nice
prestigious boarding school
called
ernestonem coburg in bavaria
germany
hans hated this decision early
on and
became depressed while
living in the new
town hans was seen as an
outsider and
was often teased by other

boys because
of his religion
to get through his difficult
childhood
he decided to put his focus on
school
as he got older he understood
that even
though he didn't like the
decision of
his uncles it became an
important factor
for his success
our uncles were not
indifferent to our
fate nevertheless the way in
which they
made me become self-reliant
very early

in life made me acquire the
habit of
looking after my possessions
and looking
back i believe that it is to this
that
much of my success is due
hans enjoyed reading books
and became
quite the bright student in
school the
subjects he most notably
excelled in
were mathematics and
languages where he
learned french and english he
was always
curious about travel and knew
that

languages would be very
useful which
would eventually play a big
role in his
career
during school he became
friends with the
swiss boy who would tell him
stories of
his birthplace in le cho de fun
a city
located in switzerland that
was well
known for its long history in
the
watchmaking industry and
hans became
very intrigued about the place
one day hans had enough of

the way of
his life and left the boarding
school in
germany to move to geneva
switzerland at
the age of 19 he got himself a
job as an
apprentice for an international
pearl
exporting company this
company was
buying pearls from various
markets and
would sort grade and package
them for
sale to jewelers he noticed the
company
wasn't really creating
anything but was

still making great profits
there he immersed himself to
learn their
business tactics and was
making good
money for his age
one day hans received a letter
from his
friend who offered him a job
for a
company called kuno kortan
kuno korten was one of the
biggest
high-quality watchmaking
businesses at
the time and was exporting
about a
million swiss francs worth of
pocket

watches each year
they also produced some of
their own
watches from scratch
this well-known company
was based in la
show de foam the place he
always wanted
to go
even though the company he
was already
working at was more
beneficial for him
his curiosity for the place and
the
business around watches were
stronger
therefore in 1900 he moved to
lesho de

fun to work for this company
he was hired as an english
correspondent
and clerk thanks to his ability
to write
and read english that he
learned back in
school and was getting paid
with a
monthly salary of 80 swiss
francs
he was also responsible for
winding
hundreds of pocket watches
every day and
verifying they were accurate
he picked
up tremendous insight into
watchmaking

and obtained a big deal of
knowledge
about how all types of
watches were
produced
however his time there was
cut short he
had to go back to germany
and serve in
the army after only two years
at kuno
korten
after his service at 22 years
old he
moved to london england to
work for
another company of high
quality watches
there he was responsible for a

bigger
role and was now in charge of
increasing
their sales during the two
years he
stayed there he successfully
managed to
find more clients for the
company and
grew their sales over time
by then he was already
thinking about
building his own business of
watches and
was learning everything he
could to
further his knowledge into his
future
business

during those years he also met
his
future wife florence francis
may crotty
and would get married shortly
after
one day hans was sitting
outside with
his much older brother-in-law
alfred
james davis and talked about
life and
plans for their future
hans told him he felt he was
confident
enough to open his own
business of
watches but he just needed
some capital

alfred did have the money and
knew how
passionate hans was about
watches
despite being very young he
took a
chance on the german and
told him he was
going to help him on his
business
venture and was ready to
invest his
money they shook hands
together and in
1905 they founded the
wilsdorf and davis
limited which would
eventually become
rolex a few years later

they partnered up with a swiss
watch
company called hermon egler
which was
based in switzerland and
started
importing movements from
the swiss
country to england placing
them in watch
cases
they also opened an office in
bien
switzerland to favor his
partnership
there
soon after they were
specializing in the
distribution of timepieces at

affordable
rates even though hans was a
lover of
watches there was one major
thing he
found unfavorable about the
watch
industry
pocket watches
at the time wristwatches were
mostly
worn by women as jewelry
and were looked
down upon by some the
reason being for
not being well precise on the
time
these watches were much
smaller than

pocket watches and consisted
of smaller
movements which would
regularly make the
clock either go faster or
slower due to
small details in the
movements this was
the main reason why pocket
watches were
more popular at the time and
was
considered masculine for its
bulky size
but for hans he mostly found
it
inconvenient to use
it was a little hassle for him
every

time he had to reach his hand
in the
pocket in order to see the time
especially when his hands
were busy
until then it was thought to be
almost
impossible to create the
perfect
wristwatch that could
consistently show
the exact time and be in
everyday use
my personal opinion is that
pocket
watches will almost
completely disappear
and that wrist watches will
replace them

definitively hans wilsdorf
1914

hans predicted that sooner or
later

wrist watches were going to
be the new

norm for everybody and was
fully

committed to finding a way to
create the

perfect wristwatch for it he
spent the

next several years traveling to
many

countries all around europe
and met

countless watchmakers to
discuss about

the small details of watches

during
those years he started to
release his
own wristwatches beginning
the same year
he founded his company one
watch after
another he was crafting down
on creating
a better high quality and
reliable
wristwatch for men and
women applying
what he learned from other
watchmakers
from his journey soon after
his company
began to get some traction
and by 1908

it was one of the top firms in
the
watchmaking industry in
england
by now hans wanted to
change the name of
his company to something
high class
catchy and easy to say no
matter the
language it also needed to be
short so
the name could fit easily in
the dial of
the watch
he spent a big deal of time
combining
five letters from the alphabet
to come

up with something until
finally rolex
was born
he immediately knew it was
the perfect
one and a few days later he
registered
the rolex name as a trademark
for
wilsdorf and davis limited in
1908
during the next few years
rolex was
becoming known for its high
quality
wrist watches and many rich
people were
already starting to use it but it
didn't

take long after when the first
world war
broke out and many
businesses including
watch firms were struggling
to stay in
business and even had to shut
down in
some cases but not rolex
this tragic event only made
han's
company more famous
because of its
already reliable wrist watches
many soldiers were given
rolex watches
instead of pocket watches
because it was
much easier and safer to use

it also helped them to better
coordinate
their attacks because of its
precision
on time
by then the company had
grown to such
extent that they were
employing 60
people in 1914 and had big
open office
spaces in london
to further their credibility
rolex had
already won the first ever
wristwatch
chronometer rating from
switzerland
followed by a class a

certificate of
precision from london's q
observatory
this made the brand more
trustworthy for
people to buy
but not everything was
sunshine and
rainbows for hans in 1914 the
british
applied 33 tax for all
companies
registered in great britain that
were
exporting goods across
international
borders
it became a big concern for
hans so he

moved his company's
headquarters from
london to bien switzerland in
order to
avoid these taxes
another reason for his move
was because
of the world war people from
britain
began to dislike the germans
since the name hans wilsdorf
was clearly
german and even though he
registered
rolex before he was still using
the
wilsdorf and davis name in
england which
was getting looked down

upon
this also led him to
completely switch
his company name from
wilsdorf and davis
limited to the rolex watch
corporation
limited in 1915
years later hans would also
register
rolex's famous trademark logo
of the
five-star crown which became
implemented
from then on on the dial of
their
watches
in 1919 the rolex watch
corporation

moved its main office from
bien to
geneva where it still stands
today
from now on the company
focused on
manufacturing the watch
movements in
bien and would transport
them to geneva
where they carefully verify
the
movements were accurate
finishing them
with their high class design
and
launching their products
it's here in geneva where hans
would go

all in with his team to
improve the
technical innovation of the
wristwatch
we must succeed in making
the watch case
so tight that our movements
will be
permanently guaranteed
against damage
caused by dust perspiration
water heat
and cold
only then will the perfect
accuracy of
the rolex watch be secured
thanks to his patience and
determination
it eventually paid off and paid

off big
time
in 1926 rolex released their
new model
that would forever change the
watch
industry the rolex oyster the
first ever
waterproof wristwatch in
history
this new model was sealed
with a very
tight case that provided an
optimal
protection for the small watch
movements
inside leading it to be
waterproof
hans knew this was

revolutionary and
people would certainly be
interested in
it but he decided to wait for
the
perfect opportunity to present
it to the
world in a very creative way
in 1927 hans heard about a
woman from
london named mercedes
glycza who claimed
to be capable of swimming
across the
english channel a 20.5 mile
body of
water that separated england
and france
people didn't believe her so

she was set
to do it again in front of
thousands of
people even though the water
temperature
was much colder
hans saw the opportunity and
encouraged
her to wear a rolex oyster
watch around
her neck after swimming for
over 10
hours she was pulled out from
the water
after almost freezing to death
and made
it about four-fifths of the way
across
the channel the task was not a

complete
success but the rolex oyster
came out of
the water in perfect condition
people went crazy for the
watch and hans
followed the publicity by
putting an ad
in front of the london daily
mail
newspaper related to the
event this is
the point where rolex rose to
international fame as a
revolutionary
watch
to further the hype hans also
marketed
his rolex oyster inside of

fishbowls
with real fishes in it on the
sail
display of every rolex
dealership for
people to see when they
walked by
this genius strategy worked
amazingly
and people became hooked on
the products
by now hans decided to
advertise heavily
on rolex so in 1928 he
worked with the
top british model at the time
evelyn
lane to promote his watches
and of

course there were pictures of
her
wearing her wristwatch inside
a fishbowl
the publicity didn't stop there
in 1933
rolex oysters were seen in the
newspaper
again related to a flight over
mount
everest in which the crew
members who
were wearing their rolexes
were very
satisfied to see that after the
flight
their watches were still 100
functional
another example was when

the famous
driver malcolm campbell set a
speed
record for driving around 300
miles per
hour wearing his rolex in
1935.

hans asked his permission to
publicize
it and malcolm accepted it
refusing to
get paid at this point people
began to
perceive rolex not only as a
high
quality designed watch but
also as a
trustworthy reliable and
technical

wristwatch that anyone can
wear for
everyday use
only great marketing is
needed to make a
company successful
during these times rolex
continued to
fascinate people when they
introduced
their updated model the rolex
oyster
perpetual in 1931 which was
the first
ever waterproof and self-
winding
wristwatch its previous model
of the
rolex oyster was a great

achievement but
the challenge was that you
still had to
often manually wind the
watch which made
it more difficult because of its
tight
case
you had to unscrew the oyster
crown
first wind it then re-screw it
again
creating this self-winding
watch was a
dream that for centuries
people tried to
perfect but none were
successful from
1934 to 1940 hans also

produced some
high quality watches outside
of the
rolex firm and trademarked it
under his
own name but it was
discontinued due to
the hatred that french british
and u.s
markets had for germany
even with all his
achievements hans
would sometimes struggle to
make his way
in the market and had to put
double the
effort to make a successful
company due
to his german name

when world war ii broke out
rolex took a
hard hit
it became difficult and
expensive to
export products outside of
switzerland
to some other big markets in
europe hans
was frustrated with the
situation and to
add to his bad luck another
tragedy
followed his wife passed
away in 1944
to commemorate his wife he
established
the wilsdorf foundation a
charity

organization for social causes
something to mention shortly
before
han's death he transferred 100
ownership
of rolex to the will's door
foundation
which still owns and controls
rolex to
this day
therefore rolex will never go
public or
be sold nor will they ever pay
any taxes
because it's essentially a
charity
as soon as world war ii
finished rolex
started to take off and

tremendously to
give you an idea in 1946
rolex had sold
its 50 000 certified rolex
chronometer
which they started certifying
20 years
ago
by the next year in 1947 their
sales
reached their 100 000
certified rolex
chronometer doubling their
sales from
the past two decades in a
single year
its success was backed up
from his new
model that was released in

1945 the
rolex datejust
the first waterproof self-
winding
wristwatch to indicate the
date of the
month on the dial
this was followed by another
revolutionary model nearly 10
years
later the rolex day-date the
first
waterproof and self-winding
wristwatch
to not only include the date of
the
month but also the day of the
week
these types of watches are

still seen to
this day which is often the
standard for
normal use of wrist watches
during the 50s rolex kept
releasing a
series of innovative watches
the most
legendary one was the rolex
submariner
introduced in 1953 it was the
first deep
diving waterproof wristwatch
that could
reach 100 meters deep in the
ocean
without getting dysfunctional
hans wilsdorf died in the year
1960

following his death rolex
started to
approach itself as the luxury
brand it
is today the company focused
their
marketing more toward being
an exclusive
watch collection for people of
high
society which worked another
factor to
consider is that in 1985 rolex
started
to manufacture their watches
with 904l a
very endurable and expensive
steel
becoming the first watch to

ever do so
which is one of the reasons
for their
expensive prices today rolex
remains as
the most recognizable watch
brand in the
world
from an orphan boy who
started with
nothing hans wilsdorf went
for his own
path and is responsible for
changing the
watch industry to what we
know today
his passion for design and
technical
innovation has placed him on

the list of
one of the most influential
men in the
industry and his legacy can be
seen
today in every person wearing
a rolex

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